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Food and Home Notes

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Actually, what is "Brunswick stew"? According to marketing specialists at the U.S. Department of Agriculture it must contain at least 25% meat and at least 2 kinds of meat and/or poultry.

* *

"Chopped ham" according to the U.S. Department of Agriculture must be prepared from fresh, cured, or smoked ham, plus certain kinds of curing agents and seasonings. It may contain dehydrated onions, dehydrated garlic, corn syrup, and not more than 3% water to dissolve the curing agents.

* *

Buying prepared meat and poultry products? When a USDA inspection mark is on the label of barbecue sauce with meat...it means that it contains at least 35% meat on a cooked basis.

* *

Most bacteria grow best at room temperature -- If bacteria are present in foods that are held for 4 hours or more at room temperature, the food may NOT be safe to eat.

* *

ENERGY

—ON HEATING WATER

A wind-power system that could provide about 150 gallons of hot water per day -- enough for a 75-cow milking operation -- will be built under a new research contract with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Cornell University.

A commercially built wind turbine near the University dairy milking center will be attached to a liquid churn designed and built by Cornell engineers to provide enough hot water to handle the cleaning and washing needs of a typical dairy farm.

About 25% of the electricity used on dairy farms goes to heat water to clean and sanitize milk handling equipment. That much energy equals the heat produced by one million barrels of Number 2 oil, or enough electricity to heat 70,000 homes for one year. Potentially, this energy could be replaced by wind-powered hot water heaters. This wind-powered system should provide about 150 gallons of hot water per day.

LETTUCE LIFE

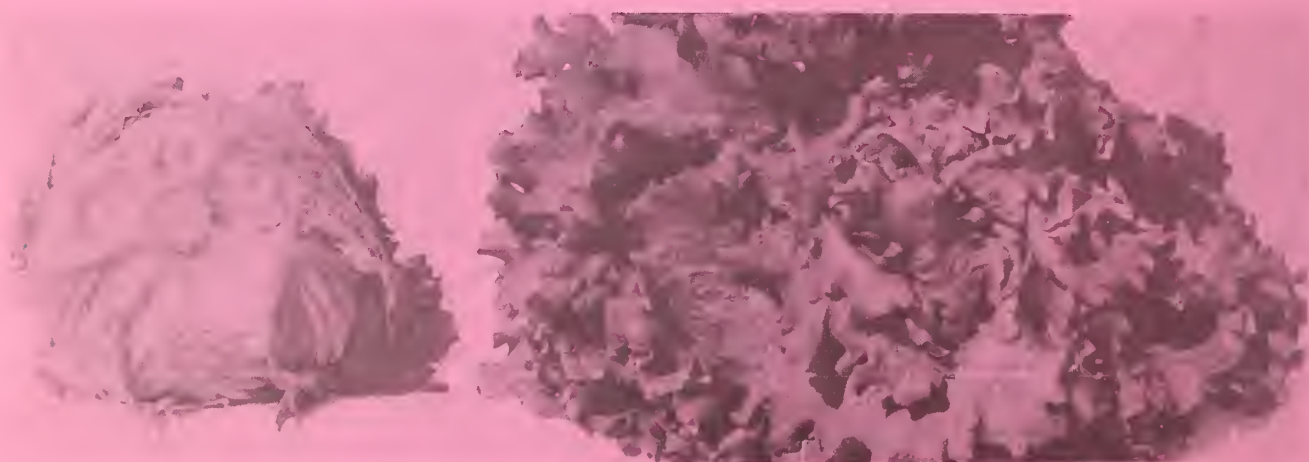
— MAY BE STRETCHED

Ready-to-use lettuce....that is, washed, trimmed and even shredded....may be stored for 20 days or more if handled properly according to U.S. Department of Agriculture research scientists. This could be very important to wholesalers, retailers--and certainly consumers who used to figure a maximum of 7 days for lettuce-life as far as appearance and taste is concerned.

Shredded lettuce is now in heavy demand by restaurants, institutions, fast-food chains and even for "at home" use because it eliminates last minute chores of washing, trimming and cutting. A sharp knife is necessary for the slicing because physical damage to the lettuce also can reduce storage-life. It needs to be kept dry also.

What the researchers have learned is that shredded lettuce needs to be shipped and stored at approximately 34° F so that it could remain marketable for about 25 days compared to 10 days for the same product at approximately 50° F. Higher temperatures have an adverse effect on storage life.

It was also found that lettuce keeps longer in a gas tight container than in common polyethylene bags. Sanitation during preparation and shredding of lettuce is important because larger numbers of bacteria reduces the shelf life time too.



COST OF FOOD AT HOME FOR A WEEK (JULY 1977)

	Thrifty plan	Low-cost plan	Moderate- cost plan	Liberal plan
FAMILIES				
Young couple.....	\$23.60	\$31.30	\$39.40	\$47.20
Elderly couple.....	21.30	28.00	34.60	41.50
Family of 4 with preschool children.....	33.30	43.60	54.50	65.20
Family of 4 with elementary school children.....	40.00	52.40	65.80	79.00
INDIVIDUALS*				
Women				
20-54 years.....	9.70	12.90	16.00	19.10
55 years and over.....	8.80	11.60	14.30	17.00
Men				
20-54 years.....	11.80	15.60	19.80	23.80
55 years and over.....	10.60	13.90	17.20	20.70
Children				
1-2 years.....	5.30	6.90	8.50	10.10
3-5 years.....	6.50	8.20	10.20	12.20
6-8 years.....	8.20	10.60	13.30	16.00
9-11 years.....	10.30	13.30	16.70	20.10
Girls 12-19 years.....	9.80	12.70	15.70	18.80
Boys 12-14 years.....	11.00	14.10	17.70	21.20
15-19 years.....	12.10	15.60	19.60	23.60

* Cost of food at home for any family can be figured by totaling costs shown for individuals of sex and age of various members of the family as follows:

- o For those eating all meals at home (or carrying some meals from home), use amounts shown.
- o For those eating some meals out, deduct 5 percent from amount in table for each meal not eaten at home. Thus, for a person eating lunch out 5 days a week, subtract 25 percent or one-fourth the cost shown.
- o For guests, include for each meal eaten, 5 percent of amount shown in table for the proper age group.

Next, adjust the total figure if more or fewer than four people generally eat at the family table. Costs shown are for individuals in 4-person families. Adjustment is necessary because larger families tend to buy and use foods more economically than smaller ones. Thus, for a 1-person family, add 20 percent; 2 persons, add 10 percent; 3, add 5 percent; 4, use as is; 5 or 6, subtract 5 percent; 7 or more, subtract 10 percent.

Note: The publication "Family Food Budgeting for Good Meals and Good Nutrition," Home and Garden Bulletin No. 94, describes USDA's thrifty food plan (used in setting the coupon allotment in the Food Stamp Program) and the three more costly plans, on which these costs are based. Single copies are available from the Office of Communication, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250. Request publication by name and number and include your ZIP code.

FOOD STORAGE

—— NEW PACKAGING IDEAS

Brown rice and other hard-to-keep cereal grains and/or peanuts may have increased shelf life by using a new packaging technique, according to U.S. Department of Agriculture chemists. The packaging idea is economical and simple.

Nuts (or the grain products) may be placed in a plastic bag impervious to carbon dioxide, flushed with carbon dioxide and heat sealed in the bag. The seeds absorb the carbon dioxide and within 24 hours the process is complete leaving the seeds in a vacuum. The researchers say the technique can be used in production line packages and larger bulb packages. No refrigeration or environmental safeguards are required.

Raw peanuts packaged by this new technique have retained their freshness and flavor for at least 8 months while roasted peanuts have been stored up to 4 months without losing their freshness.

SOYBEANS

—— AND NATURAL OIL

Margarines, salad dressings, and cooking oil with shelf lives similar to present day products, but with even better nutritional quality may be made someday from nonhydrogenated soybean oil, according to researchers at the U.S. Department of Agriculture.

Consumers have found that one of the problems of soybean oil has been its ability to develop rancidity before the product is consumed -- unless more than half of the linolenic acid is hydrogenated. Now, new soybean strains with reduced linolenic acid have been developed by the Agricultural Research Service scientists. However, additional research is still being conducted on whether or not there could be any harm to human metabolic processes. Some of this research is being conducted by Agricultural Research Scientists at Peoria, Illinois, and Beltsville, Maryland in cooperation with Georgetown University Medical School, Washington, D.C.

The scientists are continuing their research on providing better soybean oil products for consumers through improved hydrogenation techniques of soybean breeding.

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